



Dr. Mona Gupta

# Keys to Preventing Anxiety and Depression

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## HEALING PATH

The daughter of two physicians, Dr. Gupta felt destined at an early age to be in the healing arts.

She went to Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine, in Florida, emerging as an osteopathic physician "with holistic interests and tendencies. The term osteopathic physician is still an unknown to many of my patients. I explain that osteopaths attend four years of medical school training just like medical doctors, and are 'real, licensed' doctors in all the states and dozens of foreign countries, both for medicine and surgery.

"And it's true that osteopaths emphasize the importance of the musculoskeletal system, holistic medicine, proper nutrition, and environmental factors in maintaining good health. Osteopaths are known for using a hands-on approach to medicine and frequently manipulate or palpate as part of diagnosis and treatment."

After her Nova training, Dr. Gupta completed her four-year residency in psychiatry at the Baptist Medical Center at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC.

She has an eclectic practice, working with adolescents and adults no matter the nature of their health issues. "I work with such challenging problems as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia to scores of people who are challenged by events in their lives. I really do empathize with patients who are dealing with such every-day issues as anxiety, questions of self-image, depression and perhaps health challenges. Every one of us has a period in our lives when we are challenged and need support and guidance."

Dr. Gupta has a network of counselors and psychotherapists who are well-qualified to work with clients who need on-going support. "I do 'talk therapy' when it is appropriate, but I am a medical doctor and when we are dealing principally with behavioral or psychological issues, such as a history of trauma, I might refer the patient to a psychologist for longer-term therapy. I work with professionals who are very adept with PTSD patients, for example, and others who are excellent marriage counselors and therapists. It's quite remarkable how often a rocky marriage is the root cause of depression and anxiety."

For more information, contact:

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What you eat, how you sleep, and how you move are the bedrock of mental, emotional, and physical health, in the view of Raleigh Psychiatrist Dr. Mona Gupta.

"I care a great deal about quality of sleep for my patients, because sound, restorative sleep is a sure-fire way of preventing, overcoming, or modulating anxiety, depression, and fatigue while promoting overall general well-being.

"Quality of sleep is, in my view, a critical health issue that often fails to get the attention it deserves. And our use of smart phones, and digital technology in general, is often a major hindrance to quality sleep. We've talked about this before: how our addiction to digital technology is simply moving in and taking over many parts of our lives.

"Very few of us, from the young well into advancing years, are free of this addiction," she notes. "My beloved mother lives in Florida. She's a busy psychiatrist in her sixties, and she is on the phone all the time! We are globally involved in a digital epidemic, which almost certainly has health consequences. For many of us, we never really get a break—a vacation—from our computers, laptops, smart phones, iPods, and iPads. And all indications are that this digital onslaught is going to increase in intensity, and not abate a bit.

"Further, it's increasingly a global world. You may live and work in North Carolina,

and actually be employed by a Chinese company that keeps you working on the Chinese clock. That could induce anxiety!"

*Health&Healing: You link quality sleep and preventive health practices in an interesting way. What are other key issues?*

**DR. GUPTA:** Exercise is also a key factor. Medications have built-in reservations and limitations, and no one wants to be tied to a bottle of pills for the rest of their lives if there are other good options. High quality sleep is one such option. Regular exercise is another.

Along with mothering two children and maintaining a busy medical practice, I've become a runner and this commitment has been important in my life. Running has the same benefits as other kinds of outdoor exercise. Just getting outside into the sunshine, hearing the birds, smelling the trees, is hugely beneficial—and thus, you could say, preventive of a range of health issues.

When I go for a long walk or a run, I have time to reflect on all parts of my day and life: my kids, my work, all parts of my family, the world around me. It's highly beneficial, meditative, and therapeutic. I recommend it to all of my patients, even if it's just 15 minutes, once a day. That begins the process. And it can be running, jumping, climbing stairs—whatever you want to do. The point is, your body needs and wants to *move!*

*HC&H: A recent study concluded that about half of all patients who come to see a family practice physician are in fact dealing with a behavioral problem—such as depression or anxiety.*

**DR. GUPTA:** I agree. Depression, for example, often induces physical pain and takes an emotional toll. You feel less motivated both at work and home, and less interested in engaging socially with friends and family.

Typically, the person with low energy goes to his or her family doctor and describes these symptoms, and gets checked for anemia or thyroid issues. But often the culprits robbing the person of energy are poor nutrition and poor sleep habits—which join to exacerbate depression. And in North Carolina, 20 of our 100 counties have no resident psychiatrists, so the burden of treatment to a large extent falls on family practitioners, for physical, mental, and emotional issues.

While I'm emphasizing the need for quality sleep—which sometimes involves getting a professional sleep study—I also highly value quality nutrition. The consensus view seems to be that we're attacking the quality of our lives by our amazing consumption of processed junk fast foods. Poor sleep and poor diet is a combination that often adds up to a lot of emotional and psychiatric problems. **h&h**